



Axminster Urban ✓
 Axminster Rural ✓
 Honiton Borough ✓
 Honiton Rural ✓
 Seaton Urban ✓

Annual Report
 OF THE
Medical Officer of Health
 FOR
No. 2 SANITARY AREA
DEVON



1939

HONITON :
 DIMOND & CO., Printers and Stationers.

Annual Report

for No. 2 Sanitary Area for 1939,

comprising:—

AXMINSTER URBAN, AXMINSTER RURAL, HONITON BOROUGH,
HONITON RURAL, AND SEATON URBAN.

DR. D. STEELE-PERKINS, *Med. Officer of Health.*

*To the Chairmen and Councillors for the
District comprising No. 2 Sanitary Area,*

By direction of the Ministry of Health, my Annual Report for 1939 will only be an interim Report. This step is taken owing to the War, having due regard to the enormous increase of work entailed by the War, combined with the reduction of my staff throughout No. 2 Sanitary Area. In order to conserve paper and also the great expense entailed in the production of a separate report for each District, I am issuing one report only, which will cover each District; and in doing so, I am only going to refer shortly to any essential and urgent Sanitary matters that were brought to my notice during 1939.

During 1939, owing to the likelihood of war, only essential work was carried out up to the outbreak of War; and since then, only very urgent work has been sanctioned by the Ministry of Health. Fortunately in No. 2 Sanitary Area, there had been for many years past a steady improvement every year in water supplies and sanitation, and so when war came (with a few exceptions) it found the District well prepared. The extra work thrown on my Staff, owing to the War, has been enormous, but everyone has carried out their duties in a most satisfactory manner, and I am very proud of my Staff, for the manner in which they tackled their job.

The admission into the Area of a large number of Evacuees was viewed with grave misgivings at first, and

a fear was expressed that a large increase of Infectious Disease would result. This has fortunately not proved to be the case, and the amount of Infectious Disease has been about normal for the Area, and very little has occurred amongst the Evacuees.

There were amongst the first arrivals a large number of dirty heads and verminous children, and which, owing to the late arrival at night, it was quite impossible to thoroughly medically examine and segregate. These children had to be sent at once to their arranged billets, and once they had settled down and reports received, steps were taken to deal with them efficiently. I would here like to express my very deep appreciation of those foster parents who received these children into their homes, and hardly without a grumble tackled a job which was most repugnant to them, and in a very short time the whole district was cleaned up of dirty heads, and it was a real pleasure to note how, in a very few weeks, these children—the majority of whom had never seen a green field—settled down at once, and the improvement in their health was remarkable. It was a great tragedy to us that so many misguided parents removed their children back to London, after a few weeks in the country. However, those who did remain, their parents hardly knew them when they came to visit them, so great had been the improvement in health.

One of the greatest difficulties I have had to face has been the large number of children who are known as bed-wetters, and I am definitely of opinion, after observing a large number of cases, that this defect is, in the majority of cases, due to faulty upbringing, as I found a few weeks in the Sick Bay, under strict attention by the Staff, a large number of the children

recovered from their bad habits. To those foster parents who had these children in their homes, we owe a deep debt of gratitude, as, although I naturally had some complaints, the majority of foster parents were extremely good and stuck it out.

In order to deal with general sickness which could not be dealt with in their homes, I opened a Sick Bay at Honiton. Here I can accommodate up to 20 children, and during the period of its existence, it has rendered invaluable service, and more than justified its existence.

From Sept. to Dec. 31st, 43 patients were admitted to the Sick Bay for treatment.

In some Districts, a large number of soldiers have been billeted in Private Houses and Halls. Additional Sanitary accommodation has been provided, where and when required, and at all times the Military Authorities have worked in the closest of co-operation with me and my Staff. Our services have been freely put at the disposal of the Military, who have made use of them, to the mutual benefit of both parties.

One of the greatest difficulties has been the heavy calls on the water supplies of the District, which in ordinary times has hardly been sufficient for the civil population. This has been especially marked in Seaton, Axminster Urban, and Honiton Borough, but with the co-operation of the Military Authorities and the strict conservation of supplies, it has been possible to supply the demand without causing a great deal of inconvenience. In the meantime steps have been taken to augment the supplies.

I now append a short report on each District, referring only to essential matters, and for the purpose of convenience, I take the Districts in alphabetical order.

AXMINSTER URBAN.

Area	...	...	1,300 acres.
Population (excluding Military)			2,731
No. of Inhabited Houses	...		698
Rateable Value	...		£18,672
Penny Rate produces	...		£73 (net).

Infectious Disease.

The following cases of Infectious Disease were reported in 1939 :—

Dysentery—16 cases at Box Hill House.

Diphtheria—1 case (Evacuee).

Scarlet Fever—5 cases (1 Evacuee).

The outbreak of Dysentery at Box Hill House was I think definitely due to contamination of the Water Tanks in the roof of the Institution. These were cleaned out, and the outbreak ceased.

Water Supplies.

The Water supplied to the District is Plumbo Solvent, and a strict watch has to be kept to see the P.H. value does not fall below P.H.7.

During the year the Plumbo Solvent plant has been cleaned out and fresh lime added as occasion requires. In addition my Council has called in Mr. Chapman, of Torquay, to go thoroughly into the water supplies of the District, with particular reference to the Plumbo Solvency question. These reports have been received, and are now under the consideration of my Council. It is very essential that regular samples of the water should be taken, and watch kept on the P.H. value.

There has been a great shortage of Water in the District, necessitating the turning off of the water at night for a long period, but it is hoped in the near future to remedy this, by bringing in additional supplies from the Springs.

AXMINSTER RURAL DISTRICT.

Area	...	...	51,468 acres
Population	...	...	12,153
No. of Inhabited Houses	...	...	3,286
Rateable Value	...	...	£48,999
Penny Rate produces	...	...	£202
No. of Parishes	...	...	14

Infectious Disease.

Scarlet Fever—19 cases (2 cases Evacuees).

Diphtheria—1 case.

The cases of Scarlet Fever were all of a very mild type, and were evenly distributed throughout the area during the year, and at no time was there an epidemic.

Water Supplies and Sewerage.

COLYTON PARISH.

WATER. Water is supplied by the Feoffees from Springs and a Well, and is satisfactory as to quantity and bacteriologically ; chemically the Water is acid (pH 6).

COLYFORD—WATER. Water is supplied by the Council from a Spring. Sufficient at the source, but there is a shortage of water in parts of the Village during times of heavy demand, owing to the mains being too small. The water is pure bacteriologically, but chemically it is very acid (pH 5). The Consulting Engineer has been instructed to prepare plans, &c., of a hardening plant approved by the Council.

SEWERAGE. A Sewerage scheme for Colyton and Colyford has been recently completed, and the majority of the houses connected. The scheme is satisfactory except that the sewage from Colyford is turned direct into the river each night owing to the danger of the pumps choking and flooding the motor house.

UPLYME PARISH.

WATER. In the larger part of the Parish, water is supplied by the Council and is derived from two sources : (1) 5,000 gallons per day from bore holes at Yawl, pH 6.6 before treatment, 7.3 after treatment ; (2) 8,000 gallons per day from a Spring at

Burrowshot, pH 6 and unaffected by the present hardening treatment. This matter is dealt with under Axminster Hamlets (Raymonds Hill). Another part of the Village is supplied by the Woodhouse Estate, which is satisfactory in all respects.

SEWERAGE. Drainage is to cesspools at Yawl, but in Uplyme the drains and sewers discharge more or less directly into the stream. A Sewerage scheme has been prepared, but is held up owing to the War.

AXMINSTER HAMLETS PARISH.

RAYMONDS HILL—WATER. Water is supplied by the Council from a Spring at Burrowshot. There is ample water which is satisfactory bacteriologically, but chemically it is acid (pH 6) and is unaffected by the hardening plant, although the aeration given by pumping, &c., brings the pH up to 6.4. The County Laboratory report marked action on galvanised iron, none on copper, and on lead slight and not progressive. There have however been complaints of its action on aluminium, and there is no doubt that the action is strong and progressive.

SEWERAGE. The whole of the drainage is to cesspools.

SMALLRIDGE—WATER. Water is supplied by the Council from Springs. The supply is ample and satisfactory in all respects, pH 7.4.

SEWERAGE. All drainage is to cesspools. Other parts of this Parish are supplied with water by the Axminster U.D.C. One nuisance arises from a sewer which takes the drainage of cottages at Castle Hill Farm direct into the stream.

KILMINGTON PARISH.

WATER. Water supply is from Wells, of which there are 8 of a semi-public nature, and all of which are unsatisfactory. A scheme has been considered but has been deferred owing to the War.

SEWERAGE. Drainage is to cesspools, many of which are unsatisfactory and a nuisance. A scheme has been considered but is deferred owing to the War.

STOCKLAND PARISH.

WATER. Water is supplied by the Council from Springs. A further Spring has now been taken into the supply, and there is now ample water which is satisfactory chemically and bacteriologically, pH 6.9.

SEWERAGE. Main Sewerage Scheme. Scheme practically useless for want of proper maintenance.

HEATHSTOCK—WATER. Supply is from a Spring which is piped to the Village. The Council are responsible for this. The water is unsatisfactory bacteriologically.

MUSBURY PARISH.

WATER. It is not clear who supplies the water at present. The old source is unsatisfactory bacteriologically and is liable to go dry. The Council have recently purchased a further site on which there are Springs. This has been fenced to prevent pollution by cattle, and the Springs collected into two main channels, the water from both of which is unsatisfactory bacteriologically. The supply from these Springs was 2,392 gallons per day in July, and would probably be much less in a dry year. The estimated quantity required for a full scheme is 8,000 gallons per day.

SEWERAGE. Drainage is to cesspools in most parts, but near the stream the drains discharge direct into the stream, and a serious nuisance results.

CHARDSTOCK PARISH.

WATER. The water is purchased in bulk and distributed through the Council's mains. A scheme is at present before the Ministry to purchase the supply and lay further mains to Tytherleigh. The water is satisfactory bacteriologically and chemically, pH 7.5. Parts of this parish at Churchill and Waggs Plot are supplied from Smallridge.

SEWERAGE. Drainage is mostly to cesspools, some of which are unsatisfactory. One sewer runs through the Village and discharges into a cesspool, which is very unsatisfactory. A Sewage scheme is needed.

MEMBURY PARISH.

WATER. Water is supplied by the Council from Springs. There is ample water, but it is unsatisfactory bacteriologically. The site of the springs has been recently fenced against rabbits, but the water is still not satisfactory. It is satisfactory chemically, pH 7.6.

SEWERAGE. Drainage is to cesspools.

DALWOOD PARISH.

WATER. Water supplied by Council from Springs. Sufficient supply, but unsatisfactory bacteriologically. It is satisfactory chemically, pH 7.6.

SEWERAGE. Drainage is to cesspools.

SHUTE PARISH.

SHUTE. Water from private Wells. Drains to cesspools.

SEATON JUNCTION. Water from Wells. Drainage to cesspools. Extensive improvements being carried out.

WHITFORD. Water mainly from two semi-public Wells and one Well at Council cottages—all bacteriologically unsatisfactory. Drainage to cesspools.

BEER PARISH.

WATER. Water is supplied by the Clinton Devon Estates. Ample supply, and satisfactory chemically and bacteriologically, pH 7.2.

SEWERAGE. Main sewers, very defective in parts. Discharge to sea unsatisfactory.

AXMOUTH PARISH.

WATER. Water from Stedcombe Estate. Ample supply, and satisfactory chemically and bacteriologically, pH 7.4.

SEWERAGE. Main sewers laid in recent years, but very defective. Water gains access through bad joints, &c., so that this water exceeds many times the dry weather flow. Stones also gain access to the sewer and cause stoppages about twice a year. Owing to the amount of surface water in the sewers, only screening treatment can be given at the works.

COMBPYNE—ROUSDON PARISH.

ROUSDON—WATER. Water supply is by the Lyme Regis Water Co., sufficient supply and satisfactory bacteriologically and chemically pH 7.4.

SEWERAGE. Drainage to cesspools.

COMBPYNE—WATER. Water supplied by private company. Ample supply, and since improvements carried out in recent months, satisfactory chemically and bacteriologically, pH 7.4.

SEWERAGE. Drainage to cesspools.

HAWKCHURCH PARISH.

WATER. This is a scattered parish and there are four main supplies.

- (1) Spring at Gate Cottages.
- (2) Village well.
- (3) Spring at Coursey.
- (4) Well at Crewkerne road.

Nos. 2 and 3 have given unsatisfactory bacteriological samples. A main supply is badly needed.

SEWERAGE. Drainage is to cesspools, also a main sewer through the village discharging into a cesspool near the Village Hall which causes a nuisance. A certain amount of nuisance also arises from the cesspool at Red Pit Cottages.

In addition to the above there are unsatisfactory water supplies at the following Council houses:—

Cannington, Uplyme.

The Cross, Whitford Road and Hill Crest, Kilmington.

Dalwood.

Seaton Junction.

Sector.

Whitford.

HONITON RURAL DISTRICT.

Area	...	...	61,265 acres.
Population	...	...	6,770
No. of Parishes	...	...	22
Inhabited Houses	...	...	2,040
Rateable Value	...	...	£23,674
Penny Rate produces	...	...	£99

Infectious Disease.

Scarlet Fever—3 cases.

Diphtheria—3 cases.

Dysentery—1 case.

Poliomyelitis—1 case.

Water Supplies and Sewerage.

Name of Parish.	Remarks regarding condition of Water supply.
AWLISCOMBE ...	Mainly Well supplies. Adequacy good. Poor distribution.
BRANSCOMBE ...	Mainly Wells and Shutes. Poor quality. Distribution poor. New piped water supply to be provided (now postponed).
BROADHEMBURY ...	Mainly Well supplies. 2 private piped supplies. Fair.
BUCKERELL ...	Well supplies. Generally poor.
COMBE RALEIGH ...	Village Well, private Wells and Springs. Borough water supply to 1 property. Distribution poor.
COTLEIGH ...	Wells and private Ram supply. Adequacy good. Distribution poor.
DUNKESWELL ...	Public and private Wells. Adequacy fair. Distribution poor.

Name of Parish.	Remarks regarding condition of Water supply.
FARWAY	... Wells and Spring supplied. Fair.
FENITON	... Private Wells. Fair.
GITTISHAM	... Public Well, private Wells and Springs. Adequacy poor. Distribution poor.
LUPPITT ...	... Well supplies. Ram and Spring piped supplies. Adequacy and distribution fair.
MONKTON	... Wells and private Spring piped supplies. Very fair.
NORTHLEIGH	... Private piped supply. Adequacy and distribution good.
OFFWELL	... Wells. Private piped supply. Adequacy good. Distribution generally poor.
PAYHEMBURY	... Private Well supplies and Village Shute. Generally poor.
PLYMTREE	... Wells. Village to be surveyed.
SHELDON...	... Ram supply owned by Council. Good.
SOUTHLEIGH	... Private Wells and gravitation piped supply. Generally fair.
TALATON...	... Private Wells. Survey to be made. Believed not too good.
UPOTTERY	... Private piped supply and Wells. Generally good.
WIDWORTHY	... Wilmington—Private Wells and Spring piped supply. Main Shute in Wilmington Village. Adequacy good. Distribution poor.
YARCOMBE	... New public supply provided. Good.

Name of Parish.		Remarks regarding condition of Sewerage systems.
AWLISCOMBE	...	Septic Tanks and E.C's. Fair.
BRANSCOMBE	...	Main Sewer to Outfall Tank (Village). Higher part of Village at present unsatisfactorily drained.
BROADHEMBURY	...	Septic Tanks and E.C's. Kerswell Village unsatisfactory. New sewer to be provided (now postponed but temporary concrete channeling has been constructed to abate nuisance).
BUCKERELL	...	Septic Tanks and E.C's. Poor.
COMBE RALEIGH	...	Septic Tanks and E.C's. Fair.
COTLEIGH	...	Septic Tanks and E.C's. Fair.
DUNKESWELL		Septic Tanks and E.C's. Poor to fair.
FARWAY	...	Septic Tanks and E.C's. Fair.
FENITON	...	Public Sewer to Outfall at Fenny Bridges. Public Sewer at Sidmouth Junction.
GITTISHAM	...	Septic Tanks and E.C's. Unsatisfactory.
LUPPITT	...	Septic Tanks and E.C's. Fair.
MONKTON	...	Septic Tanks and E.C's. Fair.
NORTHLEIGH	...	Septic Tanks and E.C's. Fair.
OFFWELL	...	Septic Tanks and E.C's. Fair.
PAYHEMBURY	...	Public Sewer. New Outfall to be provided and new Sewer at Colestocks. Work of constructing new Sewer at Colestocks in progress, and new Outfall at Payhembury postponed.
PLYMTREE	...	Public Sewer. Poor to fair. Septic Tanks and E.C's. Fair.
SHELDON	...	Septic Tanks and E.C's. Fair.
SOUTHLEIGH	...	Septic Tanks and E.C's. Fair.
TALATON	...	Septic Tanks and E.C's. Fair.
UPOTTERY	...	Septic Tanks and E.C's. Fair.
WIDWORTHY	...	Old public Sewer. Poor to fair. Septic Tanks and E.C's. Fair.
YARCOMBE	...	Old public Sewer. Poor. Septic Tanks and E.C's. Poor to fair.

HONITON BOROUGH.

Area	...	...	3,134 acres
Population	...	...	3,100
Rateable Value	...	...	£24,180
Penny Rate produces	...	...	£93 8s. 8d.
Inhabited Houses	...	...	970

Infectious Disease.

The following cases were notified during the year:—

Scarlet Fever—2 cases.

Diphtheria—3 cases.

As regards the cases of Diphtheria, one case occurred in a travelling circus at the Fair Field, and the other two were in children who had not been immunized.

Water Supplies and Sewerage.

Water Supply.

The Borough experienced a very serious shortage of water during the summer months of 1939. Before September, when evacuees arrived, the Water Supply was turned off during the early evening, but after the arrival of the evacuees and other people, numbering probably nearly a thousand people, the Water Supply was severely taxed and we had to turn it off in the early afternoon. The position in October was even more serious, and with only approximately 3ft. of water in the reservoir, the Council was obliged to augment the supply by taking in an Auxiliary Supply and pumping it from the spring to the water in the St. Cyres watershed. By this means the supply was increased by 43,200 gallons in 24 hours and thus saved the situation.

The consumption of water in the Borough is still very high and probably will be until hostilities cease. My Council have been approached by the War Department with a suggestion for a further water supply. The situation of the serious town shortage has been placed before the Department, and they have been given the information of an abundant supply of pure spring water from Wilmington, which would give all the water necessary for the Town and the Department. This matter is still being considered by my Council and the Authority concerned. If the scheme develops it would be possible to supply the villages in the surrounding district.

[FOOTNOTE.—At the date of the completion of this Report (August, 1940), the new supply from Wilmington has been inaugurated, and the Camp is now supplied direct from this source, and the Borough is relieved of a great anxiety. Not only is there sufficient for the needs of the military, but the Borough as well.]

Sewerage.

In order to deal with the sewerage from the Camp, the War Department have enlarged the Borough Works to deal with it.

In order to deal effectively with the sewerage effluent it will be necessary, after the war, to add additional filter beds.



SEATON URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Area	...	...	1190.43 acres.
Population	...	...	3,527
Inhabited Houses	...	...	980
Rateable value	...	...	£30,000
Penny Rate produces	...	...	£120

Infectious Disease.

Scarlet Fever—10 cases.

Erysipelas—2 cases.

The Scarlet Fever cases were of a very mild type, and were sporadic cases occurring throughout the year.

Sewerage and Water Supplies.

Sewerage.

The laying of the new Sewer has been completed, and I have received no complaints as to flooding since.

Water Supplies.

Like most Districts, Seaton is faced with the necessity of providing a better water supply, and until things become normal again, little can be done, but my Council, realizing the necessity of improving the supplies, have already taken steps.

During the year an exceptionally heavy tax has been put on the Water Supplies by the addition to the population of the Evacuees, Military and Internment Camp, and considering that the Urban District had, when planning their water supplies, only catered for the normal peace-time population, I think we can be very satisfied that the water supplies have held out so well. The following is a report on the examination of a sample of water taken from the reservoir, which is very satisfactory.

REPORT ON EXAMINATION OF SAMPLE OF WATER.

Sanitary District	...	...	Seaton.
Source of Sample	...	...	Seaton. Stream.
Place at which Sampled	...	...	Reservoir.
Date and Time of Sampling	...	9/1/40.	08.45 hours.
Date and Time Received	...	9/1/40.	17.00 hours.

REPORT.

Chemical (Results expressed as parts per 100,000).

Hardness, as calcium carbonate

Temporary 2.2; Permanent 6.2; Total—	...	8.4
Chlorides as Chlorine	...	2.3
Ammonia, free and saline, as nitrogen	...	0.0072
Ammonia, albuminoid, as nitrogen	...	0.0038
Nitrates, as nitrogen	...	0.04
Nitrites, as nitrogen	...	Nil
Oxygen absorbed 3 hrs. at 37°C	...	0.066
Metals—Lead, Copper, Zinc	..	Absent

Remarks.—Sample clear and free from sediment.

Bacteriological.

Total Organisms growing on agar (2 days at 37°C)—	3 per c.c.
„ „ „ agar (3 days at 20°C)—	240 per c.c.
B. Coli	absent in—100 ml.
Probable number coli-aerogenes organisms per 100 c.c.—	Nil

Conclusions.—This sample is of a satisfactory degree of organic and bacterial purity. The excessive content of free ammonia is presumably due to the chlorination.

Your obedient servant,

DUNCOMBE STEELE-PERKINS,

Medical Officer of Health.

